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The Punishment of Dirce.

DRAMA IN SIX ACTS.

BY

MAGDALENA HAUSER.

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New-Orleans? 1900

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CAST OF CHARACTERS.

Nycteus	King of Thebes.
Epopeus	King of Sicyon.
Lycus	Brother of King Nycteus.
Amphiom and Zethus	The Twin Sons.
Daniel	The Shepherd.
Joe	One of Nycteus' Guards.
John	One of Epopeus' Guards.
Jack	One of Lycus' Guards.
Antiope	Daughter of King Nycteus.
Mary	The Maid.
Martha	The Shepherd's Wife.
Dirce	Wife of Lycus.

Soldiers and Guards.

SCENES LAID IN GRECIAN ORIGIN.

THE PUNISHMENT OF DIRCE.

DRAMA IN SIX ACTS.

ACT 1.—PALACE OF KING NYCTEUS.

SCENE 1.—MARY, THE MAID, IS CLEANING UP THE ROOM AND LOOKING VERY UNEASY.

Mary. I wonder what's keeping Miss Antiope so late this morning. I've been looking all over for her and can't find her. I've something terrible to tell her. (Going over to the side door she opens it and calls aloud):

Mary. Oh, Miss Antiope, Miss Antiope. (She gets no answer.)

Mary. I wish she'd come before that old witch of an aunt of hers comes. (Going to the door again and calling.)

Mary. Oh—Miss Antiope.

Antiope. (Enters) Well—Mary what in the world is the matter?

Mary. (*Quite excited*) Oh! Miss Antiope, I've something terrible to tell you, but you must first promise me not to tell any one who told you.

Antiope. All right, Mary, I'll promise you never to tell. Now come on, Mary, sit right down here by me and tell me all you know.

Mary. Well, you know, Miss Antiope, this morning when I was in the back room cleaning up, I heard your name mentioned; I looked out of the window, I saw your father speaking with a man.

Antiope. (Quite surprised said): And what did you hear them say?

Mary. I listened and heard your father say that he was going to make you marry him, and that he was going to speak to you himself to-day and fix everything all right.

Antiope. (Greatly surprised). I can't believe it.

Mary. (Rising from her seat she exclaimed): Well, that's what I heard him say; you'll believe me when he speaks to you himself to-day. Well, I must be going before any one comes and sees me here (she then goes off).

Antiope. (All alone weeping and speaking to herself.) Is it possible that my father will be so mean to me? I can't, and will not believe it.

Enters Mary.

Mary. Miss Antiope, here's a note for you.

(Antiope open it and reads. A bright look comes to her face.)

Antiope. Mary, ask him in, and be careful no one sees him.

Mary. Yes, ma'm. (She then goes off and comes back bringing with her Epopeus; showing him the way into the room, she then goes off.)

Antiope. Oh, Epopeus, I'm so glad you come.

Epopeus. (Putting his arms around her exclaims:) Why, Antiope, my darling, you have been weeping; what has happened to you?

Antiope. Oh, Epopeus, I'm so glad you've come. I know not what to do; some one told me that my father has arranged every thing for me to be married tomorrow; if it be so, I'd rather die than marry a man I do not love.

Epopeus. Antiope, my darling, I can't believe it.

Antiope. But if it be so what shall I do?

Epopeus. Antiope, my darling, if anything like that should happen, write to me and let me know at once, and I'll come that very night and take you away with me to Sicyon and marry you and make you happy. Antiope, my darling, I must be going before anyone comes and sees me; but Antiope, my darling, before I go you must promise me that you'll send me word at once.

Antiope. Yes, I will, but you must promise me that you'll not fail.

Epopeus. Fear not, my darling; be ready when the bell in the courtyard strikes the midnight hour, I'll be there. Antiope, my darling, good-by.

(He then kisses her good-by and goes off.)

Antiope (all alone and weeping). I can't believe that my father would be so cruel as to make me marry a man I do not know.

(Enters *Dirce.* She is surprised to see Antiope weeping; she walks over to where Antiope is seated. Placing her hand on her shoulders, she exclaims:) Antiope, my child, why do you weep?

Antiope. (Rising from her seat exclaims:) Aunty—Aunty, what shall I do—what shall I do! (She starts to weep.)

Dirce. Well, tell me what the trouble is, and then perhaps I can tell you what to do.

Antiope. Oh, aunty, some one told me this morning that my father has chosen for me a husband, a man I do not know. Pray, aunty, tell me what shall I do, what shall I do?

Dirce (In a scornful way): Well, I don't see the use of your crying and making a fool of yourself at all. He's your father's choice, and I think its your duty as a daughter to obey him.

Antiope. Well, aunty, that I'll never do.

Dirce. Well, if I was your father I'd make you marry him.

Antiope (In a very harsh manner): Well, aunty, let me tell you one thing. I don't care what you or my father says, I'm determined, come what may, I will and shall not marry that man; if I can't have my choice in selecting a husband I'll remain an old maid, I'll marry nobody.

Dirce. (Utters a scornful laugh): Ha—Ha—You remain an old maid! Well, if I was your father I'd make you marry him; I'd lock you up on dry bread and water, and punish you until you would consent. (She then leaves the room.)

Antiope (alone). I know not what to do. I love Epopeus, yet I dare not tell my father. Well, if he comes to speak to me to-day, I'll just tell him that if I can't have my choice in selecting a husband I'll marry nobody. (She then leaves the room.)

Nycteus. (Her father is then heard speaking on the outside). Very well, I'll see my daughter to-day and tell her all about it, I suppose everything will be all right; good-by (he then enters through the door, he sits down on the chair by the table, tapping the bell for the servant to come).

(Enters Mary.)

Nycteus. Mary, where is Antiope?

Mary. I don't know, but I'll go see if I can find her. (She then goes off.)

(Enters Dirce.)

Well, Nycteus, have you spoken to Antiope yet? What does she say?

Nycteus. No, I've not spoken to her yet, but I'm most certain she will consent.

Dirce. Well, I'm not. (She then goes off.)

(Enters Antiope.)

Papa, have you sent for me? (Smoothing her hand over his head.)

Nycteus. Yes, my child, I've sent for you to ask you a very important question.

Antiope. (Kneeling down beside her father, looking very anxious, exclaimed): What is it, father?

Nycteus. Antiope, my child, I've selected for you a husband.

Antiope. (Quite surprised.) A husband?

Nycteus. Yes; one of the greatest of kings; he asked me for your hand, and I told him yes; now, Antiope, my child, your answer, and you shall be the happiest woman in the world.

Antiope. (Rising to her feet.)

Nay—nay, father; I will not marry him. I do not know him, and will never marry him.

Nycteus. Antiope, my child, you speak too fast, for as far as your marrying him, I'm determined to make you.

Antiope. (Becomes very angry.) Make me you never will. When I get ready to marry I intend marrying a man of my choice or I'll marry nobody.

Nycteus. (Becomes very angry.) Very well, Antiope, my child, I'll leave you a chance until to-morrow to make up your mind. If it be still no I'll lock you up on bread and water until you do make up your mind to obey me. (He then goes off.)

Antiope. (Alone.) Oh, how could my father be so mean to me? What shall I do! What shall I do! Ah! I have an idea. I'll go to my room and write to Epopeus and tell him all about it, and tell him to come to-night to my window and take me away.

(She then goes to her room.)

(ENTER NYCTEUS, DIRCE AND TWO GUARDS.)

Dirce. Well, if I were you I'd make her marry him.

Nycteus. Oh, I'll make her marry him if it costs my life. (He then knocks on her door and calls her.) Antiope, Antiope; where are you?

Antiope. All right, papa, I'm coming. (She opens the door and comes out.) What is it, papa?

Nycteus. Antiope, I come for your answer.

Antiope. Father, my answer is no.

Nycteus (Pointing to his men, he exclaims:) Seize her, bind her hands and lock her up.

Antiope. (Then exclaims:)

Father, you can lock me up, do with me what you please, marry that man I never will (she is then seized and locked up).

End of Act 1.

ACT 2.

SCENE 1. The Elopement.
SCENE 2. Antiope's Gone.
SCENE 3. Lycus Takes His Oath.

Scene First—Tableau.

Snow Scene. The Elopement.

Curtain rises, showing where Epopeus comes in the night and takes her away. The turret clock in the court yard is striking the midnight hour. Antiope goes to her window and looks out. (*Epopeus* sees her and calls softly: Antiope, Antiope).

Antiope. (Looks down and, in a broken-hearted voice, exclaims): Epopeus, my darling, I can not come; my hands are tied.

Epopeus. (Is shocked). What, was it not enough for him to lock you up without tying your hands? (He secures a ladder, hastens up, unties her hands and helps her out of the window; she gets safely down the ladder to the ground.

Epopeus. (Putting his arms around her, exclaims:) In spite of Nycteus and Dirce, Antiope will be mine—yes, mine forever.

(Curtain drops for 5 minutes).

Scene Second—Antiope Gone.

Mary enters through a side door with Joe, one of the king's guards. In her hand she carries a tray with Antiope's breakfast, bread and water.

Mary. Well, I never knew of kings being so mean.

Joe. You didn't? well, I saw worse than that.

Mary. Well, all I've got to say is that he's nobody. I don't respect him at all, even if he is a king. I only wish I was in Miss Antiope's place; I'd show him what I'd do; he would not have the honor of having me locked up very long.

Joe. Well, what would you do?

Mary. What would I do? I'd run away, that's what I'd do.

Joe. Now, how could you run away if you were locked up in that room (pointing to the room) and you couldn't open the door?

Mary. (Gets angry.) Just like you, you always think you

so smart and you don't know nothing; now you want to know how I'd get out?

Joe. Yes.

Mary. I'd get out through the window.

Joe. (Surprised.) Through the window?

Mary. Yes.

Joe. Well, I don't see how you could ever manage to get out of that window (pointing up to the window).

Mary. Well, I'll tell you; you know what I'd do? I'd take my sheet, tie it to the shutter, and then I'd get on the window-sill, grab hold of the sheet and let myself down.

Joe. (Shaking his head). A very good idea, indeed. (aside) I'll have to tell the king to keep his eye on her.

Mary. (Picking up the tray from the table.) Come on. Joe, open the door.

Joe. (Opens the door.)

Mary. (Hesitates. She then exclaims:) Joe, I'd rather take a hundred lashes than to offer Antiope this (pointing to the tray).

Joe. It is the punishment given to her by her father, the king, for her disobedience to him, and I'm sent here with you by him to see that you do as you were told to (pointing to the door, he exclaims:) Go——

Mary. (Enters the room, she looks around quite surprised; she then exclaims:)

Joe—Joe—Antiope's gone!

Joe. What! Antiope's gone?

Mary. Yes, gone; go hasten to the king and tell him Antiope is gone.

(Joe goes off.)

Mary. (Looks around the room; on the table she finds a note, and reads aloud:) Dear Father—I've eloped with Epopeus, the king of Sicyon. I would not have done this had you acted to me as a father should have acted to his only child.

Mary. (Aside.) Well, I don't blame her.

(ENTERS NYCTEUS, horrified.)

What! my daughter gone?

Mary. Yes, gone. Here's a note I found on the table.

Nycteus. (Takes the note and reads. Trembling with horror, he exclaims:) What! my daughter eloped—gone! Gone

with Epopeus, the king of Sicyon; one whom I have despised from the first time I saw him. Oh, my daughter gone! Revenge! Revenge! May all the curses of hell fall on him! Antiope, my only child, whom I had always thought would be one of the greatest of queens. Oh, curses, curses be on you both!

(He then falls in convulsions on the floor. Mary and Joe pick him up and put him in the chair, his head bent on his breast.)

Mary. (Takes a glass of water from the tray. She gives him a drink.)

(Nycteus raises his head, his eyes turned upward.)

Mary. Joe, go for the doctor; I believe the king is ill.

(Joe goes off.)

Nycteus. (Raising his head exclaims): Antiope, my child, gone—gone. (He then falls in convulsions.)

Enters Joe and the doctor.

Mary. Doctor, the king has taken suddenly ill.

Doctor. Yes, the old man looks very ill (he feels his pulse; shaking his head, he says:) Old man, your end is near; I can do nothing for you, you are going to die. If you have anything on your mind that you would like to do or say, do it in time. (He then goes off.)

Nycteus. Yes, I know I'm going to die. Joe, come here. Go to Lycus, my brother, and tell him to come and lose no time, and tell him that I sent you to tell him that I'm going to die and my only desire is to see him. (Joe goes off.)

Nycteus. Oh, my time is near, I can feel it coming. If I only live till Lycus comes.

Enter Joe and Lycus.

(Lycus rushes over to where Nycteus is seated; he exclaims:) Nycteus, my dear brother, have you sent for me.

Nycteus. (Raising his head, exclaims:) Yes, Lycus, I sent for you to tell you that I'm going to die. Antiope, my only child, has left me and I care to live no longer.

Lycus. What? Antiope gone? What has she done?

Nycteus. (Trembling with horror) · What has she done? Eloped with Epopeus, the king of Sicyon, and I must be avenged.

Lycus. Yes, you must be avenged.

Nycteus. Lycus, I'll offer to give you my crown and throne if you promise me that you'll punish Antiope and Epopeus.

Lycus. Yes, I promise you by all the the gods above, if you promise to give me your crown and throne I'll punish Antiope and Epopeus.

Scene Third. LYCUS TAKES THE OATH.

Nycteus. Joe, call in my guards. (Joe goes off and returns shortly bringing with him the guards).

Nycteus. (Is very weak; rising from his seat, he exclaims:)

Lycus, come here, kneel down (Nycteus taking his crown from his head exclaims:) Lycus, I now crown you king of Thebes. Now, Lycus, take my sword in your hand and swear aloud before all your men.

Lycus. (Taking the sword in his hand, holding it up he exclaimed:)

By all the gods above I swear.

Nycetus. (Then falls back in his chair dead.)

CURTAIN FALLS ONE MINUTE. TABLEAU—LYCUS AND HIS MEN OFF TO SICYON.

ACT 3.

SCENE 1. THE PALACE OF EPOPEUS.
SCENE 2. THE ARRIVAL AT SICYON.
SCENE 3. THE FIGHT.
SCENE 4. THE MOUNTAINS.
SCENE 5. THE SHEPHERD'S HOME.

SCENE 1.—*Curtain Rises.*

Epopeus is seated in his chair, Antiope at his feet playing with her twin babies.

Enters John. (*One of the guards quite excited*):

Oh—heavens—heavens, bless you both.

Epopeus. What dost thou want?

John. What dost I want? Come, come look through yonder hills.

(*Epopeus walks over to the door and looks.*)

John. Look, see'st thou not? hearest thou not the sound of the cannon? (sounds of warlike instruments are heard).

John. Look, 'tis Lycus and his men coming to storm the palace and punish you both; 'tis the oath he took when Antiope's father made him king.

(Sounds of warlike instruments are heard).

Epopeus. Ah—the villian robs me of my breath, but I'll fight him to the end; go call together our men—quick, lose not a moment (Joe goes off).

Antiope. My dear husband, is it possible?

Epopeus. (Putting his arms around her) Antiope, my wife, it is, and now I will fight him to the end.

Antiope. All my hopes are lost.

Epopeus. But not mine. Ah, Antiope, my wife, to look into your eyes and gaze at my little babes gives me new strength and courage to conquer all for thee. (He then kisses her and the babes good-bye.)

Enters John.

(Followed by armed men; sounds of warlike instruments are heard on the outside.)

(*Epopeus rushes to the front, he exclaims*): To arms, let's haste, forward men, victory or death; (he then rushes out amid the clashing of arms and warlike instruments).

SCENE 2.

The arrival of Sicyon, yelling and shouting of soldiers are heard on the outside.

SCENE 3.

The fight.

Yelling of soldiers and warlike instruments are heard on the outside; Epopeus gets killed, Lycus wins the victory.

Antiope clings to her babes.

Enters Lycus and his men.

He exclaims, I will separate them forever, 'tis vengeance—vengeance alone I seek (pointing to his men), seize her.

Antiope (falls at his feet and implores)—Pity! pity! have mercy on me, see there in the cradle lie my innocent babes; pity me.

Lycus. Enough! (Pointing over to the little cradle where the little ones sleep, he exclaims:)

Take those brats and throw them out on the mountains for the crows to eat. (Two of the men go over and take the babes.)

Antiope. (Rushes over to where her babes are. She exclaims:s)

No, no! you shall not take my children from me.

(They pull her away, snatch the little ones up and carry them off to the mountains.)

Antiope. (Tries to hold them back. She then falls on her knees before Lycus and his men.)

Mercy! Mercy! Have pity on me and my children.

Lycus. Enough. (Pointing to his men, he exclaims:)

Seize her!

Antiope. (On her knees implores:) Again I implore you all, husbands and fathers of children, have mercy! Mercy on me and my children. Is there not one of you here man enough to step forth and help me and my children?

Lycus. (Pointing to his men.)

Seize her. I've enough of her nonsense. Bind her hands and feet and drag her along with us to Thebes, a prisoner.

Antiope. (Walks over to where Lycus stands. She exclaims:) Lycus, this punishment I'll bear like a lion, but woe to you all if my time ever comes; and when it does, Lycus, you shall repay it with your own blood, drop—for—drop.

Lycus. What! Seize her; bind her firmly, and drag her off. (She is then seized by armed men and dragged off.)

CURTAIN FALLS.

Few Minutes Change of Scenery.

Tableau.

SCENE FOURTH. THE MOUNTAINS.

Daniel, the shepherd, is seeking his flock; he hears a voice of a baby crying; he looks and to his surprise, finds two little babies.

Daniel. Hello! what do I hear, a baby crying; (he walks over and looks). What do I see before me, is it a dream? I can scarce believe my eyes. Ah, my heart throbs with joy. (He stoops down and picks them up.) Ah, don't cry, my

sweet little angels. I wonder who could have put them here, or where they came from? Well, this reminds me of the old song of a shepherd who went out one summer day and found two little babies on his way. I wonder if any one left them here? (He looks all around.) Ah, well, I don't see any one around here. I believe I will take them home to my wife, she'll be so happy to have two fine little babies like this. Ah, soon there will be two more shepherds in the mountains. (He then goes off.)

SCENE FIFTH. INTERIOR OF THE SHEPHERD'S HOME.

Daniel, the shepherd, is heard on the outside singing his favorite song (the song:)

A shepherd on a summer day,
Found two little babies on his way.

Martha. Dear me, there he goes, singing that old song again, and he knows I don't like it. Oh, give me a rest, won't you?

Daniel. (Knocks at the door.) Come on, Martha, open the door?

Martha. Yes, I'll open it, but you must promise me you won't sing that song any more.

Daniel. (Utters a loud, laugh; he then exclaims:) Ah, Martha, if you only knew what I found you wouldn't say that any more!

Martha. Well, if I open the door will you give it to me?

Danial. Yes, yes, I'll give them to you.

Martha. (Opens the door and is quite surprised; when he enters she exclaims:) Why, Daniel, whose babies are those?

Daniel. (Taking a seat) I don't know; they're mine, now.

Martha. Where did you get them?

Daniel. I found them in the mountains.

Martha. And all by themselves?

Daniel. Yes, all alone; I was walking along singing my old song, you know, Martha, that one you don't like.

Martha. Yes.

Daniel. I heard them crying and went over to where they were; I picked them up and looked all around; there was no one to be seen or heard; it then reminded me of my old song.

Martha. Yes, Daniel, you're right; I've always hated that song, but from to-day on I shall always love it, and sing it, too.

Daniel. But what are we going to do with them?

Martha. (Taking one of them in her arms exclaimed:) We're going to keep them and raise them and care for them as if they were our own.

Daniel. Yes, one must be a shepherd.

Martha. And one a soldier.

End of Act 3.

ACT 4.

SCENE 1. THE ARRIVAL AT THEBES.

(Yelling and shouting of soldiers are heard.)

(Curtain rises.)

SCENE 2. PALACE OF LYCUS.

Dirce is standing at the door waiting the arrival of her husband, Lycus, the king.

(Lycus enters with his guards.)

Dirce. (Throws her arms around his neck and kisses him; she then exclaims:) Ah, my dear husband, have you conquered Epopeus?

Lycus. Yes, and brought him to death, as Nycteus told me. My oath is now fulfilled and Nycteus is avenged.

Dirce. But where is Antiope and her twins?

Lycus. The twins; I ordered them to be thrown out on the mountains for the crows to eat. I reckon, by this time, the buzzards have picked their bones.

Dirce. Well, I hope so. I only wish I could have thrown them out myself. I would have choked them to death first.

Lycus. Don't worry about them; I suppose they're dead enough by this time.

Dirce. But where is Antiope; what punishment have you given her?

Lycus. Oh, she's out there; we haven't punished her yet. We dragged her along with us so that she might witness all before she dies.

Dirce. Yes; death would be too good for her.

Lycus. Yes, but die she must.

Dirce. No, no; do not kill her yet, you must first leave her to me, to have the pleasure of punishing her as I please.

Lycus. All right (pointing to his men, he exclaimed:) bring her in.

(They go out and come back shortly, bringing with them Antiope bound in chains.)

Antiope. Help, help; release me, men of blood, what have I ever done you.

Dirce. Ask me, I will answer.

Antiope. Well, then, answer; what have I ever done to you or your men?

Dirce. What have you done? You have disgraced your father's name and caused his death, and he must be avenged.

Antiope. What, I caused my father's death?

Dirce. Yes.

Antiope. Woman, you lie.

Dirce. Seize her, bind her more firmly and take her off, and cast her in the dungeon and leave her there so that I may have the pleasure of punishing her myself. (Antiope is seized by armed men and dragged off.)

SCENE THIRD. The Dungeon.

(An Elapse of Twenty Years.)

The dungeon, on one side is a barred window, in the centre a door; a dim light is burning on the table. Antiope is lying on the floor bound in chains.

Antiope. I've tried to sleep but I can not breathe here in this living tomb for twenty years; I've suffered nothing but torture. Oh, would to heaven I were dead. If I could only escape from this dungeon, I would soon get on the outside of Thebes and then to the mountains where no one would ever find me. (She starts to weep and speaks of her children.) Oh, to think of those cold-hearted, bloodless villains, who snatched my innocent babes from my arms, and cast them in the wilderness; at times in the night, when I'm alone, I can imagine I hear them crying, or torn up by some wild animals. (She starts to weep bitterly.) Oh! no, no, no; I must not think I must only believe and trust in my God above to care for them, and that some day I will meet them in heaven.

Dirce Enters. (She opens the door and goes in; she gives Antiope a kick; she then exclaims): Yes, some day, you will

meet them. Yes, who do you expect to meet, and where do you expect to meet them, you wretch you?

Antiope. Yes, some day I expect to meet my children, if not on earth, in heaven.

Dirce. (Gives her a kick.) Curses be on you; thou art hateful to my sight; if I could only heap more punishment upon you, I would do it; 'tis vengeance alone I seek; yes, vengeance, vengeance. (She then goes off).

Antiope. (Tries to get up, she manages to get on her knees). Oh! God, have pity on my soul; release me from this living tomb and send me somewhere far off, where no one will ever find me.

Enters Dirce. (She opens the door and goes in and kicks her.)

Antiope. (On her knees). Oh! thou art cruel and unjust to me; what have I ever done you? have pity on me.

Dirce. Away with you, thou art hateful to my sight. I—curse—you. (She then goes off and forgets to lock the door.)

Antiope. (Falls on her knees and begs of her God for mercy). Oh! God, father of heaven and earth, thy grace and pardon I implore; oh! pity me, my Lord most high; thy name I love forever more; have mercy on me, oh, Lord; thy pity grant, oh, heavenly God, have mercy on me forever. Amen. (Just as she says Amen, the chains fall from her hands and feet, she rises upon her feet. She then exclaims): At last my prayers are heard; my God above has heard my prayers and helped me. Now, if I could only escape. (She walks over and feels the door and finds it open; she opens it and looks around; she sees no one; she exclaims:) I believe my end is gained; joy now comes to my heart; seems as though heaven has opened its gates; I must now make my escape before anyone comes. (She picks up a few old rags and throws them around her. She then sneaks off and gets on the outside of Thebes. She then exclaims): Free! free! I now go to the mountains for safety, and trust in my Almighty God to help me.

End of Act 4.

ACT 5.

SCENE 1. THE MOUNTAINS—SHOWING WHERE ANTIOPE WANDERS ABOUT FOR THREE DAYS, WHEN SHE MEETS TWO FINE YOUNG MEN.

Antiope. (Alone.) If this lasts any longer I'll die of

starvation, but rather than stay in that prison and be punished like that I would rather die.

Amphiom and Zethus were listening; when they had heard all what she had said, Zethus, the shepherd, blows his horn; they then walk over to where Antiope sat; Antiope becomes frightened when she sees them, and falls on her knees before them and begs for them to pity her. Oh, pity me, I'm so hungry; I've been wandering in the mountains for three long days without anything to eat or drink.

Zethus. Why, where did you come from, my good lady? (stretching out his hands to help her up).

Antiope. Oh, believe me, my good sir, I'm a poor escaped prisoner, I've been torn away from my home and family.

Amphiom. What, you torn away from your home and family?

Antiope. Yes; come, let's sit down here on this rock and I'll tell you all. (They sit down; Antiope relates her sad story.)

Antiope. Twenty years ago I lived in the little city of Thebes; my father was king, his name was Nycteus; he had great ideas of what he was going to do with me; one day he sent for me and told me that he had selected for me a husband—a man that I neither knew or loved. I told him I would not marry him; he became very angry; he then locked me up and punished me; I then wrote to my sweetheart, the king of Sicyon, and told him all about it; he became very angry, and came that very night and took me away with him to Sicyon and married me; we lived very happy together; our union was blessed with two little twins—both boys. When my father found out that I had eloped with Epopeus, the king of Sicyon, he became so angry that it made him sick. The doctors told him he was going to die, so he sent for his brother Lycus, and told him he was going to die, because I had been so mean to him, and that if he would give him a solemn promise to punish us he would give him his crown and throne. Lycus was glad to become king and took the offer. My father died shortly and Lycus became king; he immediately started to make preparations and got together a large army and came to Sicyon. There was a big fight; Lycus won the victory. Tney killed my husband, tore my two little innocent babes from my arms and threw them out in the mountains for the crows to eat. They then bound me

in chains and dragged me off with them to Thebes, a prisoner; when they arrived at Thebes, Lycus gave me to his wife, Dirce, to have the pleasure of punishing me as she pleased, and for twenty years, my good men, she has kept me a prisoner locked up in chains. I've prayed to my God to help me to escape; he has heard my prayer and helped me.

Zethus. Well, my good lady, if you have no home, come home with us; we will protect you.

Amphiom. Yes, come home with us. I'm captain of the army. I have the power to protect you. (They get up and start off to their home.)

Curtain falls, 40 seconds.

INTERIOR OF THE SHEPHERD'S HOME.

SCENE SECOND. AMPHIOM AND ZETHUS ENTER WITH ANTIOPE.

Amphiom. Now, my good lady, take a seat by the fire, and don't be frightened; no one will ever dare to harm you in here. Zethus, you stay here with the poor lady while I go out and get something for her to eat. (Aside.) Oh, if I only knew who those cruel tyrants were I'd have them crushed to pieces. (He then goes off.)

ENTER DANIEL (THE OLD SHEPHERD.)

Daniel. Hello! What's this?

Zethus. Father, this is a poor unhappy woman Amphiom and I found her wandering in the mountains. We asked her where she came from. She told us that she had no home, and that she had been wandering in the mountains for three days.

Daniel. What! That poor lady wandered in the mountains for three days?

ENTER AMPHIOM AND MARTHA.

(*Martha* has a cup of tea. She gives it to Antiope, saying): Here, my good lady, is a cup of tea; drink it.

Antiope. (Takes the cup of tea and drinks. She then exclaims): Madame, words could not express my heartfelt thanks to you all.

Martha. Oh, that's all right, my good lady; don't let that worry you; all I now want is for you to tell us where you came from, and how you got lost in the mountains.

Antiope. Ah, my good people, perhaps if I were to tell you where I came from you'd throw me out of your house. Oh, how I long to be dead and by my children. (She then starts to weep).

Martha. Nay—nay, my dear lady, fear not; tell me all.

Antiope. Madam, I'm a poor escaped prisoner.

Martha. (Quite surprised.) A prisoner?

Antiope. (Relates her sad story to the shepherd and his wife. Amphiom and Zethus are sitting down on a bench listening.)

Antiope. My good people, I'm a poor escaped prisoner. Twenty years ago I lived in the city of Thebes. My father was king. His name was Nycteus. He was very fond of me, and had great ideas of what he was going to do with me. He used to say that he meant to marry me to one of the greatest of kings. One day he called me and told me that he had selected for me a husband, and wanted me to marry him. He was a man I neither knew or loved. I told him no; he became very angry and threatened to punish me. I told him that before I'd marry that man I'd rather die. He then locked me up on bread and water. I then wrote to my sweetheart, the king of Sicyon. He became very angry and came that very night and stole me away. When my father found out that I had eloped with the king of Sicyon he became so angry that it made him sick. The doctors told him he was going to die. He then sent for his brother, Lycus, and promised him his crown and throne if he would give him a solemn promise to punish me and my husband. Lycus was glad to become king and took the offer. My father died shortly and Lycus became king. He immediately made preparations and got together a large army and came to Sicyon. There was a big fight. Lycus won the victory. They killed my husband. They then entered the palace. I begged of them for mercy. They would not listen. They snatched my two little innocent babes from my arms and threw them out in the mountains for the crows to eat. They then bound me in chains and dragged me off with them, a prisoner. When they arrived at Thebes Lycus took me and gave me to his wife, Dirce, to have the pleasure of punishing

me as she pleased. She then had me bound in chains and cast in a dungeon. (She then starts to weep).

Daniel. Were your babies boys?

Antiope. Yes; twins.

Daniel. And you say the cruel tyrants threw them in the mountains?

Antiope. Yes. I heard Lycus when he told his men to take the brats and throw them out on the mountains for the crows to eat. (She starts to weep.)

Daniel. Weep not, my good lady, the crows have not eaten them yet; they still live to avenge you.

Martha. (Tapping her on the shoulder). Yes; they still live to avenge you.

Antiope. What! My children still live? Where are they?

Daniel. Yes. They still live and you now look upon them. (Pointing to where Amphiom and Zethus are seated.)

Antiope. No! No! I can't believe it. Where did you find them?

Daniel. I found them, one bright summer day; I went out to gather my flock; I was walking along, I heard a baby crying; I looked, and to my surprise, I saw two little babes lying down on the cold rocks; I looked all around, there was no one to be seen or heard, so I picked them up and brought them home with me, and there they are.

Amphiom. Ah! Heavens, can that be possible? If it be so, I'll crush Lycus and Dirce to pieces; our father's blood shall be avenged!

Antiope. (Embracing her sons, exclaimed:) Ah, my dear sons, whom I've oft believed dead, still live to avenge me!

Zethus. Yes! Mother, you may be assured we will avenge you; 'tis vengeance alone we now seek!

Amphiom (becomes very angry). Mother, now 'tis our turn. We must and shall be avenged. Come, let's go call together our friends and soldiers and march to Thebes. Mother, thou shall be avenged.

(Curtain falls.)

End of Act 5.

ACT 6.

SCENE 1. Tableau—Off to Thebes.
SCENE 2. The Arrival at Thebes.
SCENE 3. The Palace.
SCENE 4. The Fight.
SCENE 5. Tableau.

Scene First—(Tableau)—Amphiom and Zethus, with their Men, Off to Thebes.

(Curtain falls—2 minutes.)

Scene Second—Exterior. (The Arrival at Thebes. Sounds of Warlike Instruments Are Heard on the Outside.)

(Curtain rises.)

Scene Third—The Palace of Lycus.

Lycus is seated in his chair.

Enters Jack (*one of the guards*) *quite excited.* Heavens bless you, my lord. Come, see.

Lycus. What's the trouble? (He gets up and looks.)

Jack. What's the trouble? Come see, look yonder. Hearest thou not the sound of the cannon (sounds of warlike instruments are heard)? See, they are soldiers coming to storm the palace.

Enters Dirce. Oh, my dear husband, what are we going to do? Quick—quick, Jack, go call together our men at once. Antiope, our escaped prisoner, has found her sons, and they now come to avenge their mother and claim the crown and throne as theirs, and we must fight. (Jack goes off.)

Lycus. What! Antiope found her children?

Dirce. Yes.

Enters Jack,

Followed by armed men.

Lycus. Come, my brave men, let's go and surround the palace, and when they come we'll fight them to the end. (They then go off.)

SCENE 4.

The fight.

(Fighting is then heard on the outside, yelling of soldiers and sounds of warlike instruments are heard.)

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Dirce. (Alone.) Oh, if Lycus wins the victory again, I'll have them killed at once.

(Amphiom and Zethus enter the palace followed by armed men bringing with them Lycus a prisoner.)

Dirce. (Falls at the feet of Amphiom and Zethus and begs for mercy.) Mercy! Mercy!

Amphiom. Now, we have you; are you that cruel, cold-hearted woman who locked our mother up in a dungeon for twenty years, and beat her and fed her on all sorts of vile things?

Dirce. (On her knees). Mercy! Mercy! have pity on me.

Amphiom. Yes, you now beg for mercy and pity from us but what mercy or pity have you shown to our dear mother, and what wrong has she ever done you?

Dirce. Mercy, Mercy, have pity on me, do not kill me!

Zethus. No, we will not kill you, but as much mercy as you have shown to our mother will now be shown to you and your husband, (pointing to his men he exclaimed:) I order Lycus to be taken off and beheaded at once, and as for the punishment of Dirce, Amphiom, I leave that to you. (Lycus is seized by armed men and taken off.)

Dirce. Mercy! mercy, have pity on me.

Amphiom. (Pointing to his men he exclaims:) Seize her, take her off yonder to the wild bull pen, tie her by the hair to the tail of the wild bull and let him go, and let that be the punishment of Dirce.

Dirce. (Screams) Help! help. But she is seized by armed men and dragged off. (Amphiom and Zethus hasten up the stairs to the balcony and view the punishment.)

Amphiom. See, they have her tied to the bull; they now let her go; he runs, kicks and drags her through the streets.

Zethus. (Looks.) Yes, Amphiom, look; he now has her against the tree, he gores and tramples her; see the bull runs off; look, she is dead, (yelling of the people are heard all the while.)

Enters Antiope. (She rushes to her sons, arms; they then exclaim:) Mother thou art avenged.

(Curtain falls.)

Scene Fifth. TABLEAU.

(Showing where Amphiom and Zethus reign as kings, Antiope, their mother, is seated at their feet).

THE END.

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